

European Union signals support for military strike against Syria

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Following a meeting of the European Union foreign ministers with US Secretary of State John Kerry in the Latvian capital of Vilnius on Saturday, the European Union issued a statement supporting the US war preparations against Syria.

The EU's representative for foreign affairs, Catherine Ashton, read a statement calling the alleged chemical attack in Syria a "blatant violation of international law, a war crime and a crime against humanity." Without presenting any further evidence, Ashton echoed the Obama administration's claims, declaring that there is "strong evidence that the Syrian regime is responsible for these attacks, as it is the only one that possesses chemical weapons agents and means of their delivery in a sufficient quantity."

The bald assertion that the Syrian regime is the only force in the civil war capable of carrying out a chemical attack on the scale of last month's alleged attack outside of Damascus is not evidence of anything. As a matter of fact, the so-called "rebels" have been blamed by the United Nations for previous chemical attacks. And their allies and enablers, including the CIA and US Special Forces, are certainly capable of mounting such attacks.

Such are the lies being used by the EU to justify a military attack against Syria. The statement declares: "In the face of this cynical use of chemical weapons, the international community cannot remain idle. A clear and strong response is crucial to make clear that such crimes are unacceptable and that there can be no impunity. We must prevent creating a dreadful precedent for the use of chemical weapons in Syria again, or elsewhere."

It adds: "The EU urges the UN Security Council to unite in its efforts to prevent any further chemical attack."

Prior to a US military strike, however, the EU would like to have a bit more time for pro-war propaganda to wear down the massive popular opposition in all of its member countries to a new war. And it would prefer to have the United Nations provide political cover for such a predatory and illegal enterprise.

The statement notes the "on-going UN investigation of the 21st of August attack and further investigations of other chemical weapons attacks carried out in this conflict" and expresses the hope that "a preliminary report on this first investigation can be released as soon as possible." The statement welcomes the decision by French President Francois Hollande "to wait for this report before any further action."

According to a report by CNN, senior US and EU officials meeting with Kerry said that Germany was the driving force behind the EU statement.

After the EU statement was issued, Germany declared it would sign the statement that had emerged last week from the G20 summit calling for a "strong international response" to the alleged chemical weapons attack in Syria. "After we saw this excellent and very wise position of the European Union, the chancellor and myself, we decided, of course, that we would now support the G20 statement," declared German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle.

Berlin's support for the two statements highlights the fact that the German bourgeoisie is one of the driving forces behind the imperialist offensive against Syria. After abstaining from the NATO war in Libya, which the ruling elite now considers a big mistake, Germany is backing the US-led intervention in Syria, which aims to remove Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and install a pro-Western puppet regime in Damascus.

Germany is helping to build up and finance the pro-imperialist Syrian opposition, has stationed Patriot air

defence systems in Turkey, and is patrolling the Syrian coast with an espionage ship to supply the Western-backed Islamist rebels with intelligence for their murderous terror campaign against political opponents and religious and ethnic minorities.

There are three main reasons why Germany is seeking to buy some time and build a more substantial war alliance. First, the German government is seeking to provide cover for Obama, who is facing massive opposition at home in advance of a vote in the US Congress on authorizing a military attack. Second, Germany's election campaign makes it necessary for the German bourgeoisie to present more propaganda lies to the German population, which is deeply hostile to the war plans. A recent poll revealed that two thirds of the electorate would not vote for a party supporting the war. Third, Germany would like to reach a deal with Russia over the toppling of Assad, as it fears a further deterioration of German-Russian relations.

However, as the war preparations intensify, Berlin is more openly articulating its support for a military attack. As the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* said in a headline yesterday: "EU for Strong Response: EU Foreign Ministers Support Military Strike Against Syria."

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, a senior French official said the EU's support provides the French and American governments with the necessary diplomatic cover to launch a military attack without a resolution from the UN Security Council. "Roughly speaking, if the Security Council is blocked and we carry out strikes, we know that the countries that signed will politically support the response," the official said.

A lead comment in the latest issue of the German weekly *Die Zeit* entitled "Commander Looks for Troops" reflects the concerns of the European bourgeoisie: "If Obama fails to secure a majority, not only his presidency will be in shambles, but the West—at least for the time being—will lose its dominant position as a power capable of organizing the world."

Kerry welcomed the stand of the EU, calling it "a strong statement" backing "the efforts to hold the Assad regime accountable for what it has done." Speaking at a joint press conference with French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, he boasted: "There are a number of countries, in the double digits, who are prepared to take military action. The overwhelming

support is moving in the direction of holding the Assad regime to account."

Speaking partly in French, Kerry added: "This is our Munich moment. This is our chance to join together and pursue accountability over appeasement."

Kerry's awkward reference to the Munich Agreement of 1938 highlights the extent of the historic crime the imperialist powers are preparing. While Britain and France sought to appease German imperialism on the eve of World War II, Kerry and his allies are today playing the role of the aggressor, i.e., Hitler.

Nazi Germany's annexation of defenceless Czechoslovakia was the beginning of Hitler's attempt to conquer Europe. So too today, the recolonization of Syria is the first step toward a wider war against Iran and plans to redraw the map of the entire Middle East. These plans must lead inevitably to a direct confrontation with Russia and China and the threat of another world war.



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